

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all previous versions and listings of claims in the Application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for providing information on a plurality of users to a plurality of requestors over the Internet, comprising:

storing information on the plurality of users in a database located on a cookie management system and associating the information with a plurality of keys;

receiving a request at the cookie management system for information on a particular user from a requestor over the Internet;

~~receiving both a user-supplied password and a key associated with the request at the cookie management system from the requestor over the Internet, the key associated with the request included in a cookie on a machine of the particular user; wherein the key associated with the request is retrieved from the machine of the particular user by the requestor, and wherein the user-supplied password is obtained from the particular user by the requestor and grants the requestor permission to use the information on the particular user in the cookie management system;~~

~~using both the user-supplied password and the key associated with the request to retrieve the information on the particular user from the database; and~~

~~forwarding the information on the particular user to the requestor over the Internet;~~

~~wherein the requestor determines whether the cookie exists on the user machine and in response to determining that the cookie does not exist the requestor:~~

~~obtains the information on the particular user;~~

~~generates and stores the cookie including the key on the user machine; and
when the cookie does not exist, and provides the information on the user to the cookie management system.~~

~~provides the key and the information on the particular user to the cookie management system.~~

2. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein storing information comprises associating a different key for information on each user.

3. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein storing information comprises storing multiple sets of information for at least some of the users with each set of information being associated with a different key.

4. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising checking that the requestor is authorized to obtain the information on that particular user.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein forwarding comprises sending the information in XML format.

7. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising receiving new information on the user from the requestor and updating the database with the new information.

8. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 1, further comprising selecting an available key for a user and supplying the new key to a requestor so that the requestor can store the new key as a cookie on a user's machine.

9. (Currently Amended) A method of obtaining information on users, comprising:
receiving at a requestor website a request over the Internet from a user's machine;
retrieving a cookie including a key from the user's machine, the retrieving including the requestor website determining whether the cookie exists on the user's machine;

in response to determining that the cookie does not exist:

obtaining information about a user at the user's machine;

generating and storing the cookie including the key on the user's machine; and

~~when the cookie does not exist, and providing the information and the key on the~~
user to a cookie management system;

obtaining ~~thea~~ key included instored as part of the cookie;

~~receiving a user-supplied password from a user to the requestor website, the password granting the requestor website permission to use the information on the user in the cookie management system;~~

sending a query over the Internet from the requestor website to the cookie management system for data associated with the key, ~~the query including both the key retrieved from the cookie and the user-supplied password;~~ and

receiving the data associated with the key, wherein the data includes the information ~~about~~on the user.

10. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein receiving the data comprises receiving the data in XML format.

11. (Canceled)

12. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising using the data on the user in responding to the user's request.

13. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein retrieving the cookie comprises retrieving a plurality of cookies from the user's machine.

14. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising receiving a request from a second user's machine, checking for a cookie on the second user's machine, sending a query for an available key when the second user's machine does not contain any cookie, and placing the cookie with the available key on the second user's machine.

15. (Original) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising obtaining new information on the user and sending the new information and the key over the Internet.

16. (Currently Amended) A system for storing information on a plurality of users and for providing the information to a plurality of requestors, comprising:

a database for storing information on the plurality of users and for associating the information with a plurality of keys;

a cookie management system for receiving a request over the Internet from a requestor for information on a particular user, the request including ~~both a user-supplied password and a key stored as part of a cookie on a machine of the particular user, wherein the key associated with the request is retrieved from the machine of the particular user by the requestor, and wherein the user-supplied password is obtained from the particular user by the requestor and grants the requestor permission to use the information on the particular user at the cookie management system;~~ and

a retrieval unit for receiving the key ~~and the user-supplied password~~ and for retrieving the information associated with that key;

wherein the cookie management system obtains the information from the retrieval unit and forwards the information on the particular user to the requestor, and

wherein the requestor determines whether the cookie exists on the user machine, and in response to determining that the cookie does not exist:

obtains the information on the user;

~~-generates and stores the cookie including the key on the user machine; when the cookie does not exist, and~~

provides the key and the information on the user to the cookie management system.

17. (Original) The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising a key assignor for assigning available keys to new users in the database.

18. (Original) The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising an update unit for storing new information on users in the database.

19. (Original) The system as set forth in claim 16, further comprising a verifier for verifying that the requestor is authorized to receive the information on the particular user.

20. (Previously Presented) The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the cookie management system forwards the information on the particular user to the requestor in XML format.

21. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein associating the information with a plurality of keys includes associating the information with the plurality of keys according to different categories or levels of the information on the particular user and the method further comprises:

receiving a plurality of the user-supplied passwords, each corresponding to each of the keys; and

using only the user-supplied passwords to retrieve the information on the particular user from the database, wherein the user-supplied passwords correspond to an amount and type of the information that the particular user wants to the requestor to have.

22. (Currently Amended) The method as set forth in claim 9, further comprising:

associating information on the user with a plurality of the cookies according to different categories or levels of data on the user;

receiving a plurality of the user-supplied passwords, each corresponding to each of the cookies; and

receiving the data associated with the user-supplied passwords, wherein the user-supplied passwords correspond to an amount and type of the information that the user wants to the requestor to have.

23. (Currently Amended) The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the database associates the information with the plurality of keys according to different categories or levels of the information on the particular user;

wherein the cookie management system further receives a plurality of the user-supplied passwords, each corresponding to each of the keys; and

wherein the retrieval unit receives only the user-supplied passwords to retrieve the information associated with the user-supplied passwords, the user-supplied passwords corresponded to an amount and type of the information that the particular user wants to the requestor to have.

24. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 1, wherein the requestor provides the information on the user to the cookie management system after writing the cookie on the user machine so that the information is stored in the cookie management system only after the requestor knows that the cookie is successfully written to the user machine.

25. (Previously Presented) The method as set forth in claim 9, wherein providing at the requestor the information on the user to the cookie management system comprises providing the information on the users to the cookie management system after writing the cookies on the user's machine so that the information is stored in the cookie management system only after the requestor knows that the cookie is successfully written to the user's machine.

26. (Previously Presented) The system as set forth in claim 16, wherein the requestor provides the information on the user to the cookie management system after writing the cookie on the user machine so that the information is stored in the cookie management system only after the requestor knows that the cookie is successfully written to the user machine.